

# TWENTIETH ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

## NEW YORK ASYLUM FOR IDIOTS.

Transmitted to the Legislature January 12, 1871.

---

ALBANY :  
THE ARGUS COMPANY, PRINTERS.  
1871.



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2018 with funding from  
Wellcome Library

<https://archive.org/details/b30317782>

# OFFICERS.

---

*Superintendent.*

HERVEY B. WILBUR, M. D.

*Matron.*

MISS ALVIRA WOOD.

*Housekeeper.*

MRS. SUSAN E. LOESCHER.

*Teachers.*

MISS S. P. YOUNG,

MRS. M. E. COOK,

MISS M. CAVERT,

MISS M. AMIDON,

MISS E. PERTHERAM.

*Steward.*

MR. WILLIAM H. WOOD.

## TRUSTEES.

---

JAMES H. TITUS,	FRANKLIN TOWNSEND,
HENRY N. POHLMAN,	LYMAN CLARY,
ALLEN MUNROE,	E. W. LEAVENWORTH,
GEORGE F. COMSTOCK,	LAKE I. TEFT.

### *State Officers—Ex-officio Trustees.*

JOHN T. HOFFMAN, Governor, ALLEN C. BEACH, Lieut.-Gov.,  
H. A. NELSON, Sec'y of State, ASHER P. NICHOLS, Comptroller,  
A. B. WEAVER, Supt. of Public Instruction.

### *Permanent Chairman.*

HENRY N. POHLMAN.

### *Secretary and Treasurer.*

ALLEN MUNROE.

### *Executive Committee.*

E. W. LEAVENWORTH,	JAMES H. TITUS,
LYMAN CLARY.	

# STATE OF NEW YORK.

---

No. 16.

---

## IN ASSEMBLY,

January 13, 1871.

---

### TWENTIETH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES OF THE NEW YORK ASYLUM FOR IDIOTS.

*To the Legislature of the State of New York :*

Agreeably to the provisions of the act establishing this institution, the undersigned, trustees, respectfully submit this, their twentieth annual report :

The total cash receipts for the year ending September 30th, 1870, as will be seen by the treasurer's report, herewith annexed, were as follows :

Cash from State Treasurer.....	\$25,000 00
County treasurers for clothing State pupils :.....	2,450 48
Cash from individuals for instruction and clothing, etc., pay pupils.....	4,541 00
Due superintendent on contingent account.....	8 30
Overdraft at bank September 30th, 1870.....	1,468 61
	<hr/>
	\$33,468 39
	<hr/> <hr/>

The expenditures for the same period were as follows :

They are classified under sixty different heads on the books of the asylum, but are here condensed for convenience of comparison with former reports.



Provisions and supplies of all kinds.....	\$9,393 91
Fuel (nearly two years' supply).....	2,119 97
Gas .....	831 25
Furnishing articles and furniture.....	2,022 39
Farm, garden and stable .....	1,815 16
Repairs, improvements and addition.....	1,814 04
Drugs and medicine.....	76 72
School books, apparatus and stationery.....	182 48
Salaries of officers and teachers.....	5,300 00
Wages of attendants, servants and farm labor (thirteen months) .....	5,525 44
Clothing.....	1,834 65
Rent of land (two years).....	220 39
Freight and express .....	54 01
Postage .....	45 84
Interest on loans.....	34 92
Traveling expenses of trustees.....	46 35
Traveling expenses of superintendent.....	34 12
Sending children home (refunded) .....	65 83
Water (bill for eighteen months).....	450 00
Miscellaneous expenses .....	40 01
Overdraft at bank October 1st, 1869.....	1,560 89

Aggregate.....	<u>\$33,468 39</u>
----------------	--------------------

From the above statement it will be seen that there was an overdraft at the bank October 1st, 1870 .....	\$1,468 61
There was also due at that date bills of various kinds amounting to.....	2,884 42

	<u>\$4,353 03</u>
--	-------------------

#### CASH ASSETS OF ASYLUM, OCTOBER 1st, 1870.

Due from individuals for board, instruction and clothing	\$1,669 91
From counties and individuals for clothing .....	180 00
	<u>\$1,849 91</u>
Other assets of various kinds, on hand, and available for present year's support .....	3,297 33
Total assets .....	<u>\$5,147 24</u>

The actual expenses for the year, deducting the clothing bills, amounted to \$28,565.63.

Dividing this by 140, the number of pupils, we have an annual average cost of \$204 for each pupil.

The trustees, in their last annual report, asked of the Legislature that the annual appropriation should be increased from \$25,000 to \$27,000, to meet the current expenses of the present fiscal year. This was not granted. The experience of the past year, and the present condition of the finances of the institution, as above shown, induces them to hope that the annual appropriation of \$25,000 may prove sufficient for all ordinary expenses till the number of pupils is increased.

Soon after this institution was established, the trustees became satisfied that its capacity was insufficient for the accommodation of a large share of the feeble-minded children resident in the State, and capable of such improvements as is its design. They, therefore, in several of their reports, have suggested to the Legislature that increased provision should be made for such purpose. They have also stated, as the result of their experience in the supervision of this institution, the urgent necessity for the establishment of a new and custodial asylum to receive and care for that portion of the idiots of the State as were unteachable from disease, age, or other causes.

Not to enlarge upon these points, which are fully set forth in the report of the superintendent to the board, hereunto annexed, they content themselves with quoting an extract or two from a former report.

“Without discussing the question of how far down in the scale of idiocy the work of education can practically go, this much may be said: That some idiots are teachable to an extent which will fully compensate for the amount of labor involved in their instruction. These certainly should be cared for by the State.” \* \* \*

The trustees are entirely satisfied that were the present capacity of the asylum doubled, it could soon be filled by those manifestly teachable.

In the early history of the two other State charitable institutions, namely: The Blind Asylum and the Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, State provision was made for the support and education of a limited number only from each judicial district. All limitation was at last removed. Now, by a consistent and liberal legislation, every blind person and every deaf-mute, of a suitable age, is entitled to an



education at the expense of the State, if in indigent circumstances. The accommodations in the way of buildings, in both the cases mentioned, have kept pace with the number of pupils offering.

The trustees of the asylum for idiots, would only ask, then, in behalf of the class whose interests they have been commissioned by the State to guard, that the same policy that rules in regard to the classes referred to, may be extended to these.

If their request is granted, and the principle is established that the means of education shall be gradually supplied till the public want in this respect is fully met, a practical question will arise. Shall the present asylum be enlarged to a moderate extent, or shall a new institution be established? In the opinion of this board, the former course should be taken. The superintendent has indicated some of the reasons for this course. We may add, that keeping the institution within the limit that will admit of an efficient and economical administration, the same reasons that prompted the selection of the location of the present asylum originally, would hold good for its enlargement. The site is healthy, central, of easy access from all parts of the State, and the grounds are ample. At no point in the State can the supplies of various kinds needed for its maintenance, on the whole, be purchased to better advantage. The present organization of the asylum is of such a character that a moderate increase in the number of pupils would involve but little change in it. We commend, therefore, the suggestions of the superintendent in this respect to your favorable consideration.\*

The superintendent was allowed a brief vacation from his duties during the past summer, on account of the ill health of a member of his family. He availed himself of this opportunity to visit some of the institutions for idiots in Europe. This experience can hardly

\* The following extract from the annual message of Governor Palmer, just transmitted to the Legislature of Illinois, may be quoted in connection with the suggestion as to the necessity of further provision for their wants here. It may be mentioned that the State of Illinois now provides for the education of as many idiots, in proportion to the population, as does the State of New York:

"The institution for feeble-minded children, established by the act of the General Assembly in 1865, is no longer an experiment; its usefulness is demonstrated, and it must hereafter rank as one of the most interesting of the charitable institutions of the State. The labors of the Commissioners of the Board of Public Charities have developed the unexpected and startling fact, that there are in the State of Illinois nearly two thousand idiotic persons, and that, though many of them are incapable of instruction or improvement, a large proportion may be, by the employment of means adapted to their intellectual condition, made equal to the performance of many of the simpler duties of life. Such a degree of culture and advancement is relatively of the greatest consequence, both to the unfortunates themselves and to those who are responsible for their care. As the proper conclusion to what I have already said, I feel it to be my duty to urge upon the General Assembly to make special provisions for an institution for a much larger number than are now under training."



fail to be of service to him in the future management of our own assylum.

The good opinions heretofore expressed of the various officers of the assylum, of their skill in the management of its immediate interests, and of their devotion to their respective duties, are again repeated by the trustees, in closing the report of the present year.

JOHN T. HOFFMAN, *Governor.*

ALLEN C. BEACH, *Lt.-Governor.*

ABRAM B. WEAVER, *Supt. Pub. Inst.*

JAMES H. TITUS.

HENRY N. POHLMAN.

E. W. LEAVENWORTH.

ALLEN MUNROE.

FRANKLIN TOWNSEND.

LAKE I. TAFFT.

GEORGE F. COMSTOCK.

## REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT.

*To the Trustees of the New York Asylum for Idiots :*

GENTLEMEN.—The twentieth annual report of my administration of the affairs of this institution is herewith respectfully submitted.

I first present a summary of the statistics of the asylum for the past school year. The whole number of pupils connected with the asylum during that period was 150. The average attendance was 140. The number in actual attendance during the whole school year, and receiving their support exclusively from the State treasury, was 116. The number in actual attendance for school year, paying part tuition, was nine. The number paying entire cost of board and instruction was fifteen. The actual cost for board and instruction of each pupil, on the average, was \$204.

During the school year, to which this report pertains, that is, from September 1st, 1869, to September 1st, 1870, the number of deaths among the pupils was only two. Both of these were cases of pulmonary consumption that was hereditary. In one of these the special exciting cause of the disease was pneumonia; in the other hooping-cough.

Quite a fraction of the number of pupils sent to the asylum are in feeble health, and quite disposed to chronic disease. Still there has been, during the whole period since it was founded, a great exemption from sickness, and a very moderate degree of mortality.

The present number of pupils connected with the institution is 147. Several pupils accepted have not yet come, so that the number the present year will be larger than ever before.

Each year a certain number of pupils, whose term of instruction has expired, return to their friends. Each year a few who prove unteachable, or who are sick, leave to make room for new pupils. But the number of applications for admission is an increasing one.

Each year a larger number are refused admission for the want of room. The question, therefore, is forced upon the attention of those most familiar with the subject, what further provision is necessary for the class in question?

I propose to make a few suggestions upon this topic, prompted by experience and observation. It is not necessary at this time to attempt any very accurate computation of the number of idiots and feeble-minded persons in the State, of a proper school-attending age, and

who are not physically disqualified from receiving instruction, if instruction were afforded them. This has been referred to in several of the previous reports of the asylum. The number of applications for admission from portions of the State most convenient to the institution, and where it is best known, show conclusively that if its capacity were doubled, it could be filled within a very short period. This is all it is necessary to know, for my present purpose, as to the demand for the privileges it affords.

The history of legislation in this State, in analogous cases, may be referred to. In the case of the two other State educational institutions of a special character, namely, those for the instruction of deaf-mutes and blind persons, this has been true. The provision, at first, for a limited number from each judicial district, was afterward gradually made to keep pace with the wants of the respective classes, till now the instruction of every such case is provided by law and at the public expense. It is natural, then, for those who are interested in the education of idiots, and have a real faith in its necessity and practicability, to look forward to the time when legislation for this end shall be equally comprehensive. As the matter might be put, if the institution is a public need at all; if the results obtained, in the various forms of amelioration or development are, in a measure, commensurate with the cost of its maintenance, it would seem to be only necessary to show the inadequacy of present means to secure their increase and extension.

To many, even now, the facts relating to the subject are but little known. It will be well briefly to review them here.

It is now a little less than twenty-five years since public institutions for the training and instruction of idiots were established in this country.

It was the recognition of a felt want of the community. It was based upon the supposed success of similar institutions on the continent of Europe, preceding these by a few years.

Seven experimental schools, started under State patronage, have resulted in the establishment of as many public institutions, built and supported by these several States. In nearly every instance, these experimental schools have been located at the State capitals, where their modes of operation, and their results, could be conveniently scrutinized by the members of the legislative bodies upon whose favor they were dependent. They are, therefore, now the exponents of the intelligent convictions of the respective Legislatures that



founded them. This was eminently true in the history of our own State Asylum for Idiots.

The experimental school which preceded it was located at Albany. Its first board of trustees were men eminent in the State and nation. Owing to the fact that the enterprise was quite new in this country, it was visited very generally by the members of both Houses of the Legislature for several years. And it is proper to mention here, that the successive acts of legislation which changed its character to that of a permanent State institution, were passed without a dissenting vote.

The growth of like institutions in other States has been a similar experience, and similarly healthy.

It seems to me that this uniformity of result has arisen from the fact, that the results obtained in the experimental stage exceeded the prudent anticipations and cautious expressions of those most interested in the management of the incipient institution.

The late John C. Spencer, then chairman of the board, thus gave expression to the prudent disposition of that body, in the second annual report of the asylum :

“A recurrence to our first report will show with what caution, not to say doubt, the trustees entered upon the discharge of their duties. The popular and current opinion that this class of afflicted humanity were incapable of any essential improvement had not been entirely changed by the imperfect information we possessed of the efforts made in other countries. Still, enough had been ascertained to justify an experiment on a moderate scale. It had been discovered that the term ‘idiot’ very inaccurately described the different conditions of imbecility of intellect; that there were grades and degrees at great distances from each other; that the effects of bodily injuries had been confounded with original organization; that ill treatment and neglect had obscured minds naturally healthy, and, finally, that by proper discrimination and training, adapted to each case, in many instances the intellect had been aroused or developed, and new creatures born into the world. Fearing to trust too much to the sympathies and glowing hopes which such facts were calculated to excite, the trustees determined to test the experiment which the Legislature had authorized, by the same rigid rule which they would apply to any new theory in physics, viz., to see for themselves how it worked; to compare the condition of the pupils when admitted, with their condition at subsequent periods.”



They have done so ; and they now say, as the results of their observations, of their comparisons and of their deliberate convictions, that the experiment has entirely and fully succeeded.

The points to be determined in the experimental school were, first, to what extent idiots could be educated ; in what direction their training and instruction should tend ; and, finally, how inclusive, as to the whole class, the efforts should be.

Entering upon the experiment in such a spirit and with such a purpose, there can be no surprise that when, in their judgment, satisfactory results were obtained, deep convictions followed that a permanent institution should grow out of it, and that their influence to this end was brought to bear in an effective manner upon the Legislature, in whose behalf they were acting.

The same spirit of judicial investigation of the subject was adopted elsewhere. So whenever, in any State, measures were proposed for the amelioration of the condition of the class in question, the same course of experiment was tried right over again, and with similar results.

The scope of the undertaking, here as elsewhere, was destined ultimately to comprehend the amelioration of the condition of the whole class of persons described by the generic term of idiot. It was the part of prudence to limit the range of the first efforts to that end, to some portion of the general field.

The distinctive feature of the class was a mental dullness that unfitted them for development under the common conditions of intellectual culture, and that thus left them incapable of doing ordinary life-work and life-duties. The first step, then, was to meet this primal want or defect, and try to obviate it, in the most impressable period of their lives, by some form or method of education that might be found practicable.

It was seen, at the very outset, that the general principles of education were not to be contravened in this case. It was seen that if instruction were to avail, it must be because the germs of intelligence and capacity were in the pupils, and susceptible of an awakening under the special methods and appliances in the teacher's hands.

There was, perhaps, an unconscious assumption that education, when properly adjusted to the peculiar condition and wants of the subject of it, always adds not only to the mental power but social value. Applying this in a less positive form to the class in question, it was assumed that training and instruction, judiciously applied, must

diminish their mental incapacity, must make their care and support less burdensome to society.

Another circumstance should not be overlooked. The experiment here and elsewhere had the sympathy and coöperation of those connected with kindred institutions previously established. Their experience was kindly lent in the proper moulding of the new enterprise. Their influence was freely given to draw thitherward the public confidence. In fact, it quite commonly happened that the initiatory and successive steps of legislation in the several States I have referred to were the result of the direct personal efforts of such officials.

In Massachusetts Dr. Howe, known throughout the country in connection with the education of the blind, and still more widely known through his general interest in questions of social science, was the very soul of the new project of philanthropy. Wherever, in any country now, this cause has a footing his writings are freely quoted.

In Ohio Dr. Ayl, a veteran superintendent of the asylum for the insane, was, perhaps, the first in the country to call attention to the sad condition of the idiots of that State, and to propose measures for their relief. At a later day, after relinquishing the active duties of his specialty, he was quite unwearied in his interest in the preliminary means that ultimated in the establishment of the Ohio Asylum for Idiots. Dr. Patterson, with a similar professional experience, took the charge of the new institution, thus contributing greatly to its first success.

So in Kentucky, Mr. Jacobs, who had had the charge of the institution for deaf-mutes for many years, was the leader in the public movement which ended in the establishment of the State Asylum for Idiots at Frankfort.

In Illinois Mr. Gillett, of the deaf and dumb asylum, not only interested himself in securing the passage of the law for the establishment of an institution for idiots, but consented to act temporarily as superintendent of the same till a suitable person could be found to take the charge of it.

In Wisconsin Mr. Little, the superintendent of the blind asylum, has been laboring for several years to the same end with a zeal and energy most commendable. At this very time, in other States, many others with similar experience are doing the preliminary work looking to the same end.



It would be unjust not to mention another incident in the history of this movement in this country.

Almost coincident with its start here, Dr. Edward Leguin, whose labors in the same direction, in France, had been so early and so conspicuous, that he is spoken of in Europe everywhere as its originator, came to this country a self-exiled republican. While various circumstances have prevented his very active or long-continued participation in the direct management of such institutions in this country, yet he has helped to mould them in various ways. For myself, personally, I should be very ungrateful did I fail to express on every proper occasion, the obligation due from a pupil to the master.

While upon this topic of the growth of institutions of the kind in this country, I may mention what I have had an opportunity of learning during the past summer of the development of similar institutions in England. The reports of what had been done in France, especially the results of Dr. Leguin's labors at the Bicetre Hospital in Paris and elsewhere, reached England and this country quite simultaneously, through the medical journals. The efforts in the same direction in both countries were quite coincident.

A Mrs. Plumbe, of London, to whom this knowledge had come, and whose attention had also been called to the special needs of the class was the first to move in the matter there. Consulting first with Dr. Conolly, of the Hanwell Lunatic Asylum, and then with the pastor, the Rev. Dr. Andrew Reed, a school was promptly started for the education of imbeciles. The management of this fell into admirable hands. It enlisted, at once, the sympathies and the earnest coöperation of some of the leading philanthropists of the nation. In short, it may be said that the history of benevolent efforts, generally can hardly parallel the success of the new charity. Buildings temporarily occupied at Highgate and Colchester were successively outgrown. An establishment was then erected for the purpose. During the last summer I had the opportunity of visiting the Royal Asylum for idiots at Earlswood. It is located near Red Hill, Surrey, about twenty miles from London, and quite accessible by rail. In the midst of an estate of some 250 acres it stands, an institution of which any nation might be proud. With its present capacity, it accommodates 470 inmates. Additions to the buildings, now nearly completed, will enable the management to care for a total of 800. Everything about it is substantial and well ordered. The buildings are admirably adapted to the purpose for which they

were designed. The provision for the welfare, comfort and pleasure of the inmates was all that could be desired.

But all this completeness of accommodation and appliance, backed by noble patrons and zealous advocates would not suffice alone. In the services of its immediate officers it has been equally fortunate.

For a long time the direct management was in the hands of Dr. Downs, a London physician, eminent not only in his profession, but for scientific attainments generally. He has a worthy successor in the present superintendent, Dr. Grabham.

With the peculiar organization of the institution, it is no injustice to others connected with it, to remark, that the chief engineer of the whole movement, so far as its relations to the public are concerned, from a very early period, has been the secretary of the asylum, Mr. Nicholas. In view of his discretion, activity and zeal, it may be said, that if any unfortunate imbecile or idiot in England still languishes uncared for or miserable, it is no fault of his.

Two other institutions of a like character exist in England, and a third, the Royal Albert Asylum at Lancaster, is now just beginning to receive pupils. This last, built on the plan of Earlswood, is designed to accommodate 500 inmates.

In the reception room of the asylum at Earlswood, there may be seen, framed and hanging on the wall, an extract from the will of Dr. Reed, which reads thus: "I bequeath the four asylums to my beloved country, with an earnest prayer that they may be watched over with wisdom and benevolence; that they may be kept free from abuse, preserved in efficiency, and remain, age after age, memorials of that divine charity which exalteth and glorifieth a people." From a personal observation, I am prepared to believe that this trust has been worthily fulfilled, in the management of the several institutions referred to. But to return to the history of such institutions in our own country. It must be confessed that the experiments were conducted under certain embarrassments which it may be well to refer to.

In the first place the enterprise was a new one, so far as this country was concerned. Those to whose immediate charge the details of its management were committed were of necessity without experience. They could only bring to a somewhat difficult task an earnest purpose to do all they could in the premises, learning as they went.

The first pupils whose friends availed themselves of the new charity, as a rule, were extreme cases; some diseased, some deformed, some unteachable, and all without previous discipline of any kind.



From the nature of the case, the unsuitable subjects thus presented were not ordinarily dismissed till their emptiness and unteachableness was fully proven. Time was requisite for this. Even when the trial period was passed dismissal did not always take place, for various reasons. Then, too, with the limited number of pupils at the outset, in any given school, there was little opportunity for classification. The instruction and the discipline was necessarily addressed to individuals rather than to numbers. At the beginning, also, in leased buildings, and amidst scanty grounds, they were simply schools; with no opportunity to give practical direction to the powers and faculties awakened in the school-room. Theoretically, the earlier in point of age deficient children are submitted to special training and instruction the greater their prospects of ultimate benefit. Acting upon this, the mass of pupils selected were too young to be applied to any practical industry. Just when they had reached an age when they could be taught something useful their terms of residence at the asylum would expire, and they be sent away to acquire elsewhere and under less favorable circumstances the real knowledge which they most needed. Thus, the ultimate end of all the educational efforts were made too remote for the observation and apprehension of the teachers.

Besides, these ultimate ends were to be determined, somewhat, by the social condition of the different pupils, inasmuch as a difference in this respect would effect their circumstances after leaving the institution.

Then unconsciously, perhaps, too much reference was had, in the experimental stage, to such intellectual and other exercises to what was seen, to make the most impression upon visitors. Too much deference was paid, in the instruction, to the wishes of the parents and friends, not always the best judges of the actual or relative condition of their children, or of the proper purpose of their training.

Such were a few of the embarrassments that have attended the early history of such institutions. As time has elapsed a change in all these respects has been going on for the better.

Experience has been acquired by those immediately engaged in the work. With the multiplication of institutions has come the opportunity of comparing experience, by one occupied with the same cares and duties. Faith and zeal have, in some instances, taken the place of misgivings and what was only pains-taking.

With the growth in number of pupils has come an average representation of the whole class of idiots. This average is of a higher and more hopeful character in the way of original endowments.

In like manner, experience has shown more clearly than formerly, where the line should be drawn in the reception of pupils. What class of cases will make adequate return for the labor of instruction bestowed upon them ; and what may be considered hopeless.

It may be mentioned, that, as a rule, the rejected ones were either so manifestly diseased, that no attempt to educate them would have been made if their mental faculties had been unimpaired ; or else had within them the seeds of serious chronic disease, that would manifest itself fatally at some no distant period.

Again, in an asylum, some time in operation, there are established grades of pupils, and scales of exercises ; there is a fixed system of drill and discipline. The incoming pupil, whatever his peculiar condition, finds an appropriate place, both of association and instruction ; is borne along through an appointed routine, and is, in a measure, impressed or subdued, quite unconsciously, by the prevailing habit of order. Buildings erected specially for the purpose, and grounds, where the labor of the boys can be made available in the simplest forms, have rendered the proper care of the pupils much less onerous and have helped materially in the solution of the questions relating to practical industry that surrounded the subject at the outset.

And finally, the public mind, wherever a knowledge of these institutions has extended, has become, to some extent, educated up to just conceptions of what their true office is, the good they are designed to do.

Some points may now be considered established. A large percentage of the number of idiots in any state can be rendered capable of some degree of useful occupation, thus compensating in whole or in part for the cost of their maintenance, if trained and instructed at a proper age. Almost all, after excluding the quite deformed and diseased (hospital cases), can be made decent in their habits, easily managed and able to assist in ministering to their own personal wants.

Even the cases excluded under the last head are made by proper attention to their wants, and by bringing them under the sway of regular habits of living and acting, more comfortable to themselves and far less troublesome to others.

This last fact is true, not only of those admitted at a proper age to educational institutions, but has a practical application to all receptacles in city or country where these unfortunates are brought together. It has a similar application to those cared for in families at home. It may be added that one of the indirect influences emanating already



from these establishments has been to ameliorate the condition of the great mass of idiots wherever found.

All these, it must be conceded, are very desirable results, if they have been or can be accomplished without a disproportionate expenditure of time and money. And as this is often a controlling influence, and very properly so, in the decision of the question as to the expediency of appropriating the public money to kindred purposes, two or three remarks may be made upon this point.

First. The buildings necessary for the proper management, care and teaching of idiots can be constructed at a relatively moderate cost. The construction accounts of such institutions, wherever located or built, abundantly confirm this assertion.

The elegant establishment at Earlswood, in England, to which allusion has been made, cost but \$500 per patient or inmate, when reduced to our present currency.

The last building erected for this special purpose is the Royal Albert Asylum for Idiots, just completed at Lancaster, England. Built in the most substantial manner, with some concessions in the way of adornment to its royal and noble patrons, expressly designed for a class of cases above the grade of pauperism; commodious and in all respects convenient, with every appliance and equipment for the care of its inmates, and fully and thoroughly furnished; its total cost is about \$240,000. It will accommodate 500 pupils. Reducing this amount to our present currency, and dividing by the number of inmates, the cost per pupil will not exceed \$600.

Our own establishment, erected without any experience to guide, cost, relatively, about the same.

It is not necessary to compare this with the cost of buildings lately erected, and now being built in this or other States, for similar purposes. The facts are well known to the public.

In like manner the cost of support of such asylums has been relatively small. The New York State institution may be taken as an illustration of this point. For the five years preceding the war, the average annual per capita cost of the board, management and instruction of the pupils was less than one hundred and sixty dollars (\$160). During the period of the greatest depreciation of the currency, it reached one year \$230. Since then it has been gradually diminishing, till it is now about \$200. Had the capacity of the asylum been equal to the reception of a hundred more pupils the expense would have been still more moderate, for obvious reasons.

Finally, it is now very obvious, as has been already mentioned, that the present provision to meet the various necessities of the idiots of the State is very inadequate. It should be borne in mind that further provision to meet their needs is in many instances only changing the mode of meeting such needs. Very many of their number, in county poor-houses or lunatic asylums, are now a public charge. It is often no fault of their care-takers under such circumstances that they are neglected and miserable. There is a want of knowledge of what should be done to relieve them. The proper means and appliances are not supplied, and the absence of such means makes the charge burdensome and expensive. Very many of the idiot or imbecile children now in indigent families will ultimately have to be thus supported at public expense. Besides, instances are not unknown in the State where a whole family have become paupers on account of having one or more members feeble-minded or idiotic. The extra care and attention these demanded so fettered the industry of the other members as to turn the scale and land the whole family in the poor-house.

The public provision for idiots is inadequate, because, to-day, not one-half of their number of a proper age and of unquestionable aptitude for instruction can be accommodated in the State institution designed for them. It is inadequate, because large numbers of idiots are miserably cared for in the families of the indigent, and, at the same time, paralyzing the industry of such families. And some in families of ample pecuniary means are scarcely less objects of pity, on account of the difficulty of ministering to their peculiar wants without the requisite experience.

Of course the needs of the class are constantly forced upon the notice of those connected with this institution. Nor can their eyes be shut to the fact that, relatively to the State provision in the case of the other dependent classes, they are left far behind. No deaf-mute or blind child in the State is now denied admission to the asylums provided by the State to meet their respective wants. Two other asylums for idiots, founded since the New York asylum went into operation, have already outgrown it.

Acting upon this knowledge, an appeal was made to the Legislature by your board, four years ago, in their annual report, to increase the capacity of the asylum, and thus enable it to meet the pressing demands of the community. The appeal was supported by statistics that it is not necessary to repeat now.



It came before the Legislature at a time when the expenses of the war were making a heavy drain upon the State finances, and the board decided not to press the claim before the committee of ways and means. It was, therefore, left for a more favorable opportunity.

Two years since their attention was diverted in another direction. A favorable opportunity seemed then to be presented for securing an unoccupied building that was on the farm connected with the new asylum for chronic insane, at Ovid. The building was well adapted to the purpose, with a small outlay in fitting it up. It would accommodate some two hundred custodial cases. They could be cared for by the organization that already existed there.

The recommendation was made by your board in their last two reports. A conditional clause was inserted in the supply bill of last year to defray the expense of the work. It is now known, however, that the trustees of the Ovid asylum have fitted up the building referred to for the reception of the harmless insane.

No alternative now remains but to return to the former plan and increase the capacity of this institution. There are some obvious advantages in this. A moderate increase in the number of its inmates will manifestly diminish the annual cost of their individual support. It will enable a wider range of classification. By a greater extension of the buildings, will be afforded opportunity for a more complete separation of the sexes. It will open the way to a more complete system of employment for the older pupils, and make a place for a longer-continued occupation of a portion of them.

The pupils received into an asylum like this, of a strictly educational character, may be divided into three classes. First, those who prove, after a fair trial, to be unteachable. The by-laws provide for the dismissal of these. For such custodial institutions are needed, except where the ample pecuniary means of the parents permit a suitable disposition of them elsewhere.

Next those who after a term of years at training and management may be safely remanded to whence they came. This is to be desired in all cases where favorable family circumstances, and intelligent guidance allow them to continue on in the way of the begun improvement. Thus, when females who have with us acquired a knowledge of the ordinary domestic occupation, and habits of industry, this capacity, with good management in the family at home, may be made to contribute to their self-support and their happiness for the remainder of their lives.

The same is true in the case of boys who have learned to labor in any simple occupation, and have acquired similar habits of industry.

There are those of our pupils, however, who have made equal progress in the school-room, and in the various industrial employments adopted here, and who have developed equal intelligence and capacity, but who have no proper home to which they may return. The families from which they came may have been broken up, or their home conditions are extremely unfavorable for their future care and management. They have outgrown, in point of years, the orphan asylum from which they came. If from the poor-houses of the State, from which some of the pupils have been received, the management in these is not such as to warrant the belief that when returned thither they may not, in a measure, relapse into former habits of stupidity and idleness.

One feature in the organization of the asylum at Earlswood, England, was designed to meet these conditions.

Pupils are admitted there by the ballots of the patrons. List of candidates for admission are prepared for the information of the patrons, setting forth the circumstances of each case. They are divided into two classes, short term and long term cases. Each year a certain number of each class are balloted for. This second ballot secures a longer residence for those whose circumstances seem to make such longer continuance in the institution desirable.

It is decided to enlarge this institution. The additional room, the new accommodations that might be provided in the way of workshops, would enable us to engraft this feature with some modifications upon our present plan. Thus, in what may be called the homeless class, when any peculiar aptitude or capacity is manifested for such employments as would be most productive in diminishing the annual cost of the maintenance of the asylum, whether in out-door occupations, household matters or, perhaps, in assisting in the care of the more helpless ones; let such be retained for a longer period than is now the rule.

At all events the experiment could be tried till a proper custodian establishment is provided. The experience thus gained will be also useful in determining the form which such new charity should take. Incidentally, it would keep more clearly and constantly before the minds of those engaged in the immediate work of training and instruction, the precise direction in which all their efforts should tend.



When the suggestion was made, on a former occasion, for an enlargement of the capacity of this asylum, plans and estimates were obtained. These warrant the statement that by the expenditure of \$30,000, accommodations could be provided for eighty additional pupils. A part of this sum would be expended in enlarging one of the buildings in the rear of the main building. The remainder would be applied, either in adding a wing to the principal building or in erecting a new building of moderate size, at a short distance from it. In any event, these additions would be built in the most inexpensive manner.

The entire State appropriations for building purposes to the asylum, to this date, have been \$86,000. Adding the proposed \$30,000, and it will make a construction account of \$116,000, for the accommodation of two hundred and twenty pupils; or, at the rate of \$527 for each inmate. This would be an outlay scarcely exceeding half that of any similar institution in the State.

It only remains for me to say that the management of the institution seems to be entirely satisfactory to those most interested; namely, the parents and friends of the pupils; and, furthermore, that my assistants, in every department, by their fitness for their work and devotion to it, are deserving of full and hearty commendation at my hands.

H. B. WILBUR,  
*Superintendent.*

SYRACUSE, Oct., 1870.

116,000 (37)  
86,000  
30,000

## TREASURER'S REPORT.

ALLEN MUNROE, *Treasurer of New York Asylum for Idiots, in account current with the State of New York, for cash received and expended for the general supplies and the salaries and wages of officers, teachers, attendants and servants of said asylum, during the year ending September 30, 1870.*

1869.

*Dr.*

Oct. 1.	Cash from State Treasurer.....	\$6,250 00
Dec. 20.	Cash from State Treasurer.....	6,250 00
	Clothing account.....	2,450 45

1870.

March 7.	Cash from State Treasurer.....	6,250 00
June 1.	Cash from State Treasurer.....	6,250 00
	Receipts from pay-pupils.....	4,541 00
	Due Superintendent.....	8 04
	Balance.....	1,468 61
		<hr/>
		\$33,468 10
		<hr/>

1869.

*Cr.*

Oct. 1.	Overdraft .....	\$1,560 89
---------	-----------------	------------

1870.

Jan. 1.	By cash paid on warrants for quarter ending December 31, 1869.....	7,896 82
April 1.	By cash paid on warrants for quarter ending March 31, 1870.....	7,196 57
July 1.	By cash paid on warrants for quarter ending June 30, 1870.....	7,503 61
Sept. 30.	By cash paid on warrants for quarter ending September 30, 1870 .....	4,721 70
	Accounts audited by executive committee and paid by steward during year.....	4,549 34
	Discounts .....	39 17
		<hr/>
		\$33,468 10
		<hr/>

(Signed)

ALLEN MUNROE.



## APPENDIX.

---

### EXTRACT FROM THE BY-LAWS OF THE ASYLUM.

“ The design and objects of the asylum, as established by the action of the Legislature, are not of a custodial character, but to furnish the means of education to that portion of the youth of the State not provided for in any of its other educational institutions. Those only will therefore be received into the asylum who are of a proper school-attending age, and for such periods of time as shall, in the estimation of the board of trustees, suffice to impart all the education practicable in each particular case, and in conformity with the regulations hereinafter specified.

“ Children between the ages of seven and fourteen, who are idiotic, or so deficient in intelligence as to be incapable of being educated at any ordinary school, and who are not epileptic, insane, or greatly deformed, may be admitted by the superintendent, with the advice and consent of the executive committee. Applications in behalf of others shall be referred to the action of the board of trustees.

“ The parents or next friends of those in whose behalf applications are made for admission as pupils shall make answers in writing to such questions as the superintendent and committee shall prescribe. They shall, moreover, if of sufficient ability, engage to pay such reasonable sum for the education and support of the pupils, and to furnish them with such proper clothing while in the institution, as shall be stipulated by the superintendent, and they shall in all cases be bound to receive them back, when required, free of expense to the asylum. But no idiots shall be received into the asylum without there shall have been first lodged with the superintendent thereof a request to that effect, under the hand of the person by whose direction he is sent, stating the age and place of nativity, if known, of the idiot, his Christian and surname, the town or city and county in which they severally reside, the ability, or otherwise, of the idiot, his parents or guardians, to provide for his support in whole or in part; and if in part only, what part and degree of relationship, or other circumstances of connection between him and the person requesting

his admission ; which statement shall be verified in writing by the oath of two disinterested persons, residents of the same county with the idiot, acquainted with the facts and circumstances so stated, and certified to be credible by the county judge of the same county. And no idiot shall be received into said asylum unless the county judge of the county liable for his support shall certify that such idiot is an eligible and proper candidate for admission to said asylum as aforesaid.

“The State pupils in the asylum will be selected in equal numbers, as far as may be, from each judicial district, from those whose parents or guardians are unable to provide for their support therein.

“The State pupils will be expected to come to the asylum provided with a supply of neat and substantial clothing for the first six months, after which period the clothing will be furnished by the asylum, at the expense of the respective counties of which they are residents, as in the case of the deaf and dumb and the blind asylums of the State.

“A bond will be required in all cases, except the case of a State pupil, to insure the removal of the pupil free of expense to the institution.

“All pupils will be received upon trial for one month, at the end of which time a report upon the case will be made to the parents or parties sending them.

“The education furnished by the institution will include not only the simpler elements of instruction usually taught in common schools, where that is practicable, but will embrace a course of training in the more practical matters of every-day life, the cultivation of habits of decency, propriety, self-management and self-reliance, and the development and enlargement of a capacity for useful occupation.

“There shall be a vacation during the whole month of August, unless otherwise directed by the board, at which period all pupils must be removed from the asylum, by the parents or guardians, if required by the superintendent.

“Applications for admission to the asylum, stating age, sex, general health, and such other particulars as will enable the trustees to judge of the teachableness of the person for whom application is made, must be directed to the superintendent, Dr. H. B. Wilbur.”

It will be seen by reference to the foregoing, just what the mode of admission is. Application is first made to the superintendent of the asylum, furnishing such particulars of the condition of the person for whom application is made, as will enable the executive com-



mittee to decide whether the party is a suitable subject for admission.

If the case come within the purpose of the institution, a blank form of application is at once sent, which, when filled up and returned to the superintendent, furnishes a statement of the name, residence, etc., of the party, and his or her pecuniary condition, or the pecuniary condition of his or her parents, verified by the affidavit of two persons acquainted with the circumstances related in the statement, and confirmed by the certificate of the county judge.

On the return of this circular, if there is a vacancy from the judicial district in which the party resides, permission is at once given for his or her admission.

If no vacancy exists at the time, the parties interested are so notified, and the application is filed, the applicant to receive the benefit of the first vacancy, in turn.

It is provided in the by-laws that each pupil shall be taken on trial. The probationary period named is one month. The practice has been otherwise. The cases rejected on trial have usually been retained a much longer period; at all events, till it was certain they were not suitable subjects for improvement.

The grounds upon which pupils have been dismissed under this rule hitherto, have been, first, serious ill-health that seemed likely to terminate in a speedy death. In most of the cases included under this head, the wisdom of the decision requiring their removal, has been verified by the fact that they died not many months afterward. Next, confirmed epilepsy. When this disease has been fully developed, the same reasons that suggested the article in the by-laws against the admission of epileptics, would require their dismissal.

Again, true dementia, or a loss of mind resulting from organic lesion of the brain, as a consequence of some disease in infancy or childhood.

Again, cases of idiocy conjoined with insanity. In these, the very measures of management and instruction adopted in the case of idiocy, only excite and aggravate the peculiarities presented; and as there is no proper provision in this institution for confinement, seclusion or restraint, their dismissal is rendered unavoidable.

In a few cases only, it could be said that all efforts to educate or radically improve, that the asylum afforded, had failed of their purpose.

